Mamluk Architecture and the Question of Patronage

The study of patronage of the arts and architecture during the Mamluk period helps us sharpen the picture that we have of this alien ruling class. At the same time, it illuminates the relationships which existed between the Mamluks, the religious elite, and the rest of the population. In examining the patronage of architecture in the Mamluk period, historians and art historians face a number of complex problems. Some derive from the nature of the buildings themselves or their inscriptions, while others result from the conflicting accounts provided by the various literary sources and, sometimes, by the waqf documents. Scholars also have to be aware of external factors—economic, social, political—which had an impact on the decisions of patrons to construct one type of building rather than another.

The present article is an attempt to reflect on the patronage practices and to raise some questions about the architectural achievements of the Mamluk period. It also tries to sort out the patterns followed by both the military and civilian elite when commissioning their buildings. A survey of the extant monuments from the period between 1250-1517, as well as those no longer extant but recorded in the literary sources, allows us to identify four broad categories of buildings of either a religious or a secular nature. The classification of the buildings under a given category is based on the function of the buildings as defined in their inscriptions, literary sources, or waqf documents. Accordingly, buildings may be grouped under four categories: (1) religious, which includes the jāmi’ī, masjid, madrasah, khānqāh; (2) social, which includes the zāwiyyah, ribāṭ, hīmāristān, sabīl, sabīl-kuttāb, ḥammām; (3) domestic, which consists of the palace, dār, and house (qā’ah, riwāq, ṭabaaqah, rab’); (4) commercial/industrial, which includes the qaysāriyāh, wakālah, khān, funduq, sūq, mī’ṣarah, tahrīn, furn, maṭbakh sukkar, sirjah.

The ratio of religious to secular buildings constructed at a certain time is difficult to assess. At the present time our understanding of the economic, political, and social factors which had an impact on the choice of buildings constructed by patrons allows us to draw only broad conclusions as to how this choice was made. We can sometimes speculate that

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1The reader is asked to keep in mind the fact that, in some cases, buildings—especially large complexes—had multiple functions. In such cases the predominant function of the building will determine the category into which it falls. Civil and military architecture have been deliberately left out of this discussion since both categories included buildings which were generally part of large projects placed under the aegis of the state.

2Although madrasahs and khānqāhs had functions which were not directly related to religious rituals, their primary concern was the teaching of the religious sciences and/or Sufism; therefore, their inclusion under this category is justifiable.

3Zāwiyyahs have been deliberately excluded from the category of religious buildings since their function—at least as far as Mamluk Egypt is concerned—was not directly associated with “orthodox” religious practice. See Fernandes, “The Zāwiya in Cairo,” Annales islamologiques 18 (1982): 116-121.

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the need to control or create ties with religious scholars often motivated patrons to establish foundations providing positions for the civilian elite.4 We can further point out the relationship which existed between the growing interest of patrons in constructing commercial buildings such as wakālahs or qaysāriyāhs and funduqṣ around the end of the fourteenth century and onwards, and the growth of Mediterranean trade. One can also speculate on the lack of interest shown by the Mamluks in the construction of mosques per se on the basis of the religious developments of the period.

However, before turning our attention to the pattern of patronage arising from the varying motives of patrons, let us pause for a moment to ask the question, Who were the patrons? We could use—although with reservation—the answer provided by L. A. Mayer, who writes:

. . . although the bulk of public buildings in Islam were either devoted to religious use (like mosques, madrasas, kuttābs, zāwiyas, cemeteries) or founded out of a religious impulse (like hospitals or sabils), with very few exceptions they were constructed by order of laymen. Economically they were entirely the work of the governing classes, military or civilian, and independent of any ecclesiastical authority. . . . And just as there is no ecclesiastical architecture of any consequence except that ordered by laymen, so there is no bourgeois architecture worthy of the name.5

The preceding statement calls for two comments. Firstly, it uses a terminology which totally ignores the nature of Islam when it refers to an “ecclesiastical authority” and “ecclesiastical architecture.” Secondly, the statement mentions the absence of “bourgeois architecture” without taking into consideration the structure of the Muslim society under study. Despite its defects, we have to agree with Mayer’s statement that the patrons were those who could afford to pay for the construction of a building, whether from the military or civilian elite. It would also be appropriate to include explicitly two groups who were actively involved in the establishment of both religious and secular foundations: women and merchants.

The best documented of the various groups of patrons are the rulers and their military elite. The sources provide us with enough information to allow us to reconstruct the pattern of patronage of this group during the Mamluk period. It is evident that religious foundations, which helped the ruler legitimate his rule, were the primary focus of patronage by the sultan and his amirs. For the Mamluks, perhaps even more than for any other group, political power was acquired and maintained by force and legitimized by an ideology at the center of which was Islam. According to the medieval scholars, a good ruler was the one striving to impose and uphold the sharī’ah and thus hold high the banner of Islam.

With this ideal of rulership in mind, the Mamluk rulers arranged and rearranged their public buildings so as to project and maintain an image of themselves in harmony with the expectations of their subjects, both the religious elite and the masses. The patronage of religious buildings such as the jāmi‘, for instance, was regarded as part of the ruler’s

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Thus, it is not surprising to note that every effort was made by the Mamluks to associate their names with the greatest possible number of religious buildings, whether newly constructed or rebuilt. Among the most important foundations were *jum’ah* mosques, which provided a place for the community to perform their daily rituals, attend the Friday prayer, and listen to the *khutbah*. Sultan Baybars encouraged the introduction of the *khutbah* in a number of mosques in the same urban agglomeration. He also ordered the building of his *jāmi‘*, which was constructed between 665-67/1266-69. Many important mosques date from the time of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad who, along with his amirs, embarked on a large program of building and rebuilding mosques as mentioned by al-Maqrīzī. However, after a period of about twenty-five years of intense activity involving the construction of mosques, one notes that fewer mosques were built after the death of this sultan.

Talking about a fifteenth century *madrasah*, van Berchem pointed to the fact that the Friday rituals were now celebrated in such foundations: “À cette époque, on ne bâtissait presque plus de Mosquées, et l’office du vendredi ce célébrait dans la plupart des madrasahs.” By the mid-fourteenth century, a number of *madrasahs* also had the function of *jāmi‘*s. Despite the strong opposition of the Shāfi‘ī school of law to the deliverance of more than one *khutbah* in an urban center, this practice was introduced in a number of foundations. However, we should point out that permission to build a *jāmi‘* or to introduce a *khutbah* in a *madrasah* had to be obtained from the sultan and approved by the religious scholars. It is clear that this privilege was enjoyed primarily by members of the military elite. With time, however, the same privilege came to be shared by members of the civilian elite, women related to the sultans, and rich merchants. Al-Sakhāwī mentions a number of cases in which construction of, or introduction of the *khutbah* in, a foundation were authorized. Thus, we read that the *khutbah* was delivered in the *madrasah* built by al-Zaynī ibn al-Jīān next to his house, with the permission of the sultan and sanction of the religious scholars. Elsewhere, we read that the *khutbah* was delivered in the mosque built by al-Zaynī al-Uṣṭādār in Būlāq with the permission of the sultan (*bi-idhn al-sulṭān*) and the agreement of the jurists.

Because the *khutbah* was delivered in so many *madrasah* foundations, some jurists felt the need to point out that a *madrasah* was not a mosque. Indeed, we read: “*madrasahs* are not to be considered mosques but only the *mihrāb* itself or some say the *iwān al-mihrāb* exclusively [is to be considered as a *jāmi‘*]; the rest of it is not to be treated as a *jāmi‘* since it is permissible [for people] to gather in it, to eat and to work in it, and so on.”

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6 Ibn Taymiyyah, in a number of his *fatwās*, goes so far as to consider a ruler’s neglect in building or restoring mosques as deviant behavior; *Majmū‘ Fatāwī Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyāh* (Riyadh: Matābi‘ al-Riyād, 1381).
8 Ibid., 304-325.
The practice of delivering the *khutbah* in *madrasahs* was still frowned upon by the Shafi'i jurists as late as the middle of the fifteenth century. Al-Sakhawī mentions an incident which took place between Shafi'i and Hanafi jurists regarding the introduction of the *khutbah* in the *madrasah* of Qadi Badr al-Din Hasan ibn Suwayd, built in Misr in 845/1441-1442. The author clearly states that Hanafi jurists allowed more than one *khutbah* in one *misr* while the Shafi'is opposed it. He then provides his own opinion on the matter saying: “non-authorization of multiplicity of *khutbahs* is more appropriate and God provides guidance” (‘*adam al-ta’addud awld wllh al-hadd*). The opposition of the Shafi'i jurists was so strong that when the introduction of the *khutbah* in the *madrasah* of Qalawun was proposed in 774/1372-73, a great debate took place between the Hanafis and the Shafi'is. *Fatwās* were issued on the subject, explaining their respective positions. Al-Suyūṭī adds that al-Bulqinī wrote to support the practice while al-'Irāqī opposed it.

Could this strong opposition to the deliverance of more than one *khutbah* in an urban center have influenced the decision of patrons regarding the type of building to be commissioned, especially in centers like Bayn al-Qasrayn? Baybars, Qalāwūn, al-Nāșir Muhammad, Barquq, and Barsbāy, each of whom erected one of their foundations in this location, declined to build a *jami’*. They all chose to build religious foundations, the functions of which were associated with teaching and Sufism. Furthermore, the *khutbah* was not given originally at some of the early foundations.

The former site of the Fatimid palaces, which had been transformed by the Ayyubids into a center of religious and commercial activities, Bayn al-Qaṣrāyin became a prime locus for the construction of large foundations during the Mamluk period. Indeed, early patrons, in imitation of their former master al-Šālih Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, elected to build at least one of their foundations here whenever possible. The fact that Bayn al-Qaṣrāyin was deemed an important site highly appreciated by religious scholars is reflected in a comment that al-‘Aynī made when talking of Sultan al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh. According to this author, when the sultan discussed his intention to build a *madrasah/jami’* in al-Qāhirah with his advisors, they all recommended the location opposite the *madrasah* of Sultan Barquq in Bayn al-Qaṣrāyin so that al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh, too, would have a foundation standing among those of other sultans.

It is also worth mentioning that by the Mamluk period Bayn al-Qaṣrāyin had become, as al-Maqrīzī says, the site of an important *sūq*. This probably would also have influenced the type of foundation erected there, and would perhaps have caused reluctance to build a *jami’* in this location. Indeed, the objection to the building of a *jami’* in a *sūq* is well documented. Al-Sakhawī and Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī both mention a heated debate which took place apropos the *jami’* of al-Ghamrī (d. 849). Many religious scholars, we are told, admonished him and some tried to dissuade him from building the *jami’*. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī mentions that he was among the people who advised the shaykh to forego
introducing a *khutbah* in the foundation (i.e., keep it a *masjid*) but that he was faced with the patron’s total refusal of his advice. Al-Sakhawi, who reports the same event, writes: “The scholars censured him for that” (*fa-‘a’ba ‘alayhi ahl al-‘ilm dhālika*).

Both the opposition of the Shafi‘is to more than one *khutbah* in a *miṣr* as well as the jurists’ stand regarding the construction of a *jum‘ah* mosque in a *suq* must have inevitably influenced the choice of the foundations to be built on the site of Bayn al-Qasrāyn. It is therefore not surprising that a sultan like Baybars al-Bunduqdārī, who commissioned a very large mosque in 665-67/1266-69, chose for its location a *maydān* outside al-Qāhirah proper. The same sultan had already built a *madrasah* in Bayn al-Qasrāyn a few years earlier and had requested explicitly that no changes be made to this building. We read in al-Maqrīzī that Baybars went to his *madrasah* in al-Qāhirah and, “He entered it and so did the *fuqaha‘* and the *qurra‘* . . . and he said, ‘this is a place I have dedicated to God. . . . When I die do not bury me here and do not alter the plan of this place’. There was always an attempt to keep burial grounds away from urban centers. Al-Suyūṭī confirms that Baybars was firmly opposed to any urban development around burial grounds. Interestingly, when the custom of adding a *qubbah* to religious foundations in urban centers was adopted by the early Mamluk sultans, their legal function as specified by the *waqf* documents was that of a *masjid* and/or teaching place. Only the *fisqiyah* (burial chamber) underneath them was to be considered a burial ground.

Talking about the complex of Qalaʿwūn, al-Nuwayrī writes that when the sultan saw al-Turbaḥ al-Ṣāliḥīyāḥ, he ordered the construction of a *turbaḥ* for himself, containing a *madrasah*, a *bimāristān*, and a *maktab sabīl*. He established as *waqf* a number of his properties including *qaysāriyāhs* and *riba‘*, and most of the income from these was endowed on the *bimāristān* and then on the *turbaḥ bi-al-qubbah*. The use of the two terms juxtaposed clearly indicates that the two words were not synonymous. Often the functions of the *qubbah* went beyond what was specified in the *waqfiyah*. Indeed, many sultans made it a place for holding important *majālis* and paid regular visits to their mausoleums. For instance, Mamluk chronicles report a number of *majālis* taking place in the *qubbah* of Qalāwūn and attended by his sons and grandsons. Furthermore, this *qubbah* became the locus of an important ceremonial: the swearing of the oath, which took place at the manumission of a *mamlūk* and his promotion. In an article entitled “Reflections on Mamluk Art” Oleg Grabar writes:

> The problem with all these Mamluk foundations is that there are so many of them, located so close to each other—as in the Shari‘ Bayn al-Qaṣrāyn in

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22 The reference here probably points to what had happened to the *madrasah* of his previous master al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb when his wife, Shajar al-Durr, added a *qubbah* to it.
Cairo . . . and in Cairo’s eastern cemeteries—that one begins to doubt their actual social, religious, or intellectual uses and usefulness.27

One has to wonder why it is that we are still left in doubt as to the “usefulness” of a number of monuments whose function is clearly indicated in their inscriptions and explicitly described in great detail in their waqfiyahs and by the chroniclers. Referring back to the descriptions of buildings provided by the literary sources and the waqfiyahs of the buildings erected along Bayn al-Qasrayn, one can not help but notice their importance in the eyes of the people who witnessed their construction. There can be no doubt whatsoever as to the purpose and usefulness of a complex such as the one erected by Qalâwûn in which a bîmâristân was joined to a madrasah and a qubbah. Al-Maqrîzî describes the building, explaining the patron’s choice of foundations and deals briefly with some of the services provided by the bîmâristân.28 Details of the services provided by this hospital are found in its endowment deed.29

It is equally interesting to read the texts of two chancery documents issued in the name of Qalâwûn, both dated 684/1285, appointing the ra’îs al-aṭibbâ’. In the first document we read:

Since ‘îlm (science), as we are told, consists of two types, ‘îlm al-adyân (religious sciences) and ‘îlm al-abdân (sciences of the body, anatomy), it was incumbent upon us to focus on both and create for them, during our days, whatever will ensure their existence in perpetuity. . . . Thus we have constructed for the two a monument rooted in piety.30

In another document of appointment issued by the same ruler to designate Qâdî Muhadhdhab al-Dîn as teacher in the bîmâristân one reads:

We have seen former rulers adopt sound policies towards their subjects. They showed great care for the sciences of religion but neglected the sciences of the body. Each constructed a madrasah and yet neglected to build a bîmâristân ignoring thus [the Prophet’s] saying: Science is of two types (al-‘îlm ‘îlmûn). . . . We have built a bîmâristân that fills the eyes with admiration and which surpasses other buildings and preserves the health and well being of people.31

Baybars al-Manṣūri writes about the complex of Qalāwūn which poets described in a number of *qasīdahs*, from which he quotes a few verses:

A minaret shining like a star in the darkness providing guidance to the world / A madrasah standing as testimony to its high civilization, a lofty achievement / The light of which eclipses the Zāhirīyah. . . / Knowledge by it remains soundly rooted and disseminated thus suppressing atheism and debauchery.  

*Waqf* documents and other sources also mention some of the reasons motivating patrons to endow pious foundations. Among the principal reasons for constructing *jāmiʿ*s or *masjids* is the desire to follow the sayings of the Prophet, who is reported to have encouraged their building in a number of *ḥadīths*. In the statement of purpose contained in the *waqfīyahs* one reads that the Prophet said, “After the death of an individual three of his deeds will survive. Among the three, the most important is the construction of a house for God.” One also reads that the Prophet said, “He who builds a house for God, no matter how small its size, God will build a place for him in heaven.” In addition to the sayings of the Prophet, the idea of reward in the afterlife is always stressed in the statement of purpose found at the beginning of the *waqfīyahs*. It is also interesting to note that the buildings themselves often carry at the beginning of the foundation inscription the Sūrat al-Tawbah (S. 18).

The decision of a patron to build a religious building was not, however, always dictated by personal considerations such as self-aggrandizement or reward in the afterlife. Indeed, sometimes the decision to build a *jāmiʿ* was a direct response to the needs expressed by the people or by religious scholars. Discussing the Jāmiʿ al-Jadīd al-Nāṣirī, Baybars al-Manṣūri writes that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad gave the order to construct this *jāmiʿ* on the Nile opposite the Isle of Rawdah because the inhabitants of this *mahālāl* (urban center) had no *jāmiʿ*. They kept expressing the wish to have a *jāmiʿ*, which would save them the trouble of walking to other mosques on Fridays. Baybars al-Manṣūri writes that al-Nāṣir, “being aware of their needs, ordered the construction of this mosque and took a personal interest in its planning.” We are told that it was constructed in the best way “displaying beauty, perfection and grandeur. . . . Trees lined its sides surrounding it with the perfume of their flowers and the shade of their branches.”

Discussing the same mosque, al-Maqrīzī writes that Qādī Fakhir al-Dīn ibn Faḍl Allāh, the ṭawīr al-jaysh, built this mosque “in the name of” (*bi-ism*) the sultan. Although the statement of al-Maqrīzī leaves no doubt as to who the real patron was, or that the Qādī must have been the supervisor of the construction, there are other cases where the question of patronage poses a problem. Indeed, how should we define patronage? On what basis do we attribute a building to a patron, especially when we are dealing with royal constructions? Is the person giving the order to construct a monument and whose name figures in the inscription on the building preceded by “has ordered construction” (*amara bi-*

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33Ḥujjat Waqf al-Mansūr Qalāwūn, al-Awqāf 1010; Ḥujjat Waqf al-Sultān Hasan, al-Awqāf 881, fols. 4-9; Ḥujjat Waqf al-Sultān Abū al-Naṣr Qāyṭbāy, al-Awqāf 886, fols. 4-6, to name but a few.
to be considered the patron or is the one who undertakes the construction at his own expense the real one? Furthermore, in cases of the reconstruction of a building in ruins, are we entitled to credit the new monument to the patron whose name is on the new inscription or the previous patron?

The presence of phrases like “from his personal funds” (min mālihi al-khāṣṣ) or “has constructed [it] for” (ansha’a lī) found in some inscriptions on buildings, as well as a number of other oddities which exist in the inscriptions of some monuments, and discrepancies between the reports of chroniclers and waqf documents dictate great caution when deciding the question of patronage. For example, in the case of the madrasah of Khawand Barakah (Umm al-Sulṭān Sha’bān) constructed in 770/1368-69, the inscriptions clearly state that Sultan Sha’bān “has ordered the construction of this blessed madrasah for his mother” (Amara bi-inshā’ hādhīhi al-madrasah al-mubārakah li-wālidatihi Mawlānā al-Sulṭān al-Malik al-Ashraf Sha’bān).

Yet the waqfiyah and the sources explicitly state that she is the one who commissioned (ansha’at, banat) it and paid for its construction. Another interesting case is presented by the complex of Faraj ibn Barquq (803-813/1400-1411) in the desert, where all the inscriptions, except for one, mention that this sultan ordered its construction. The only inscription which does not associate the construction of the turbah with the name of Faraj is that found in the interior of the northern mausoleum at the base of the dome. It reads: Sultan Barquq “has ordered the construction of this blessed turbah . . . in the reign of his son Mawlānā al-Sulṭān al-Malik al-Nāṣir Abū al-Sa’ādat Faraj . . .” (Amara bi-inshā’ hādhīhi al-turbah al-mubārakah Mawlānā al-Sulṭān al-Shahīd al-Malik al-Zāhir Abū Sa’īd Barquq . . . fi ayyām walidihī Mawlānā al-Sulṭān al-Malik al-Nāṣir Abū al-Sa’ādat Faraj . . .). The information provided by the sources indicates that Barquq was the one who had selected the location for the construction of a turbah and had left a large sum for its erection. Al-Maqrīzī mentions that in his will (waṣīyah) Barquq set aside 80,000 dīnārs for the construction of the turbah outside Bāb al-Naṣr and that he indicated that the surplus money was to be used for the acquisition of properties to be made waqf on the foundation. There seemed to be no doubt in people’s minds at the time as to who was the real patron since Ibn Taghrībirdī thought it important to correct their beliefs when he wrote:

People think that this turbah was built (ansha’ahā) by al-Zāhir Barquq before his death and they call it Zāhirīyah but this is not so, for none other than al-Malik al-Nāṣir Faraj built it after his father’s death.

It is clear that Barquq did not witness the construction of the turbah and that Faraj probably was the one who gave the order to build it. However, since Barquq expressed the wish to

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36van Berchem, CIA, Égypte, 1:279.
38van Berchem, CIA, Égypte, 3:316, nos. 205, 206, 207.
39van Berchem, CIA, Égypte, 3:320, no. 212.
build it, selected the location, and left the money to erect it, should we not consider him, as his contemporaries did, the real patron?

Another odd case is reported by Ibn Iyās who discusses a madrasah built in 859/1455 by the nāẓir al-khāṣṣ al-Jamālī Yūsuf. He writes that "al-Jamālī began to construct a madrasah in the saḥra‘ for the sultan . . . and the expenditures for the work were paid out of his own money, not that of the sultan (wa-kāna maṣrūf dhālika min māl nāẓir al-khāṣṣ Yūsuf dīna māl al-sultan). . . . He built a zāwiyah opposite this madrasah and a hawsh for the burial of the family of the sultan."42. Elsewhere, we read that the same amir restored (jaddada) a madrasah—the Madrasah Fakhrīyah—and placed on it an inscription in the name of the sultan.43 Ibn Iyās’s reports lead us to assume that we are faced here with a gift offered to Sultan Ínāl and his family.

Occasionally we find references to sultans’ names in inscriptions on buildings built by amirs. For instance, we find an inscription on a wooden door in the mosque of Azbak al-Yūsufī (900/1494-95) which mentions the name of Sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf Abū al-Nāṣr Qaṭṭaba and praises him.44 Could the references to the name of a ruling sultan possibly indicate that the latter contributed to the construction of the building, donating money or building materials, and that as a gesture of gratitude his name would be mentioned in one of the inscriptions? The most interesting example is the one offered by the inscription on the mosque of Qānībāy built in 845/1441-42, which mentions the name of Sultan Jaqmaq.45 Indeed, in that particular instance we know that when the sultan died in 857/1453 he was buried in the qubbah attached to the mosque. We also know that when the sultan’s son died he too was buried in this mausoleum.46 The questions raised here are, Why was the sultan buried in this mausoleum and why does his name appear in the inscription? Did Jaqmaq build this mosque and donate it as a gift or did Qānībāy build it?

The largest group of patrons was undoubtedly the military elite who would have had no trouble securing for themselves a permit to build a public building. However, one should not ignore the contributions of other groups such as members of the civilian elite, women, and rich merchants. Some women of the households of Mamluk sultans became actively involved in the construction of religious buildings, especially from the time of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s rule. Some of them, such as Sitt Hadaq (740/1339-40), built mosques; others built madrasahs like the madrasah of Umm al-Sultan Shaḥbān (770/1368-69). A number of them patronized Sufi foundations or other charitable ones. Hence, Umm Anūk47 built the khanqāh known under her name, the khanqāh of Tughāy in 749/1348; Khawand Tūlbāy built hers in 765/1363-64. The daughter of Baybars al-Jāshankīr built the Ribāt al-Baghdādīyah in 684/1285-86.

42Ibn Iyās, Badā‘i‘ al-Zuhūr, 2:330-331, 367. The amount spent on the construction as reported by the author was 12,000 dinārs.
43Ibid., 291; see also al-Sakhāwī, al-Tibr al-Masbūk, 346.
45van Berchem, CIA, Égypte, 3:381, no. 260.
47Khawand Tughāy, also known as al-Khawand al-Kubrā, was a concubine of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muhammad who later became his favorite wife. Tughāy, who was known for her beauty, had acquired great power and influence and, according to al-Maqrīzī, some qaḍīs and amirs would go so far as to kiss the floor in front of her as they would do for the sultan. Tughāy gave birth to a son Anūk, hence the title of Umm Anūk that al-Maqrīzī uses to refer to her foundation. Tughāy died in 749 leaving behind a great fortune. See al-Maqrīzī, al-Khiṭat, 2:425-426.
A number of important religious foundations were built by civilians, patrons whose influential position and/or wealth earned them the privilege of erecting public buildings. Some were built by viziers, for instance, the jāmi‘ at Dayr al-Ṭīn rebuilt by Tāj al-Dīn ibn Ḥanāna in 672/1273. Ibn Ḥanāna, we are told, had moved to a new residence in the Bustān al-Ma‘ṣūq. Realizing that the old jāmi‘ was too small for the inhabitants of the quarter, and for his own convenience (so as not to have to walk too far for the Friday prayer) he decided to tear down and rebuild the mosque in 672/1273.48 Likewise, the vizier Sa‘d al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Bashīrī rebuilt the Jāmi‘ Birkat al-Raṭlī when he decided to move to a new house nearby.49

Members of the religious elite, especially qādīs, also rebuilt, restored, or built religious foundations. Qādī Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Umar al-Suyūṭī, nāẓir bayt al-māl, built the Jāmi‘ al-Suyūṭī in 671/1272. This mosque was restored and enlarged by Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad, known as Ibn al-Bārizī, the kātib al-sirr, in 822/1419.50 Qādī ‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ, one of the most famous patrons, is said to have commissioned a number of public buildings, among which was a madrasah dated 823/1420 at which he had the khutbah read, and behind which he added a ribāt for women, and a mosque in Būlāq built in 817/1414.51 Al-‘Aynī and al-Buqlīnī both built madrasahs, while the Jāmi‘ al-Ḥanafī was built by Shaykh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ḥanafī in 817/1414.52

It is interesting to note that a number of mosques and madrasahs were built by influential officials who were converted Copts or of Coptic descent and/or rich merchants. Al-Maqrīzī mentions the Madrasat al-Baqrī built by Ra‘īs Shams al-Dīn Shākir, one of the converted Copts who held the position of nāẓir al-dhakhīrah during al-Nāṣir Hasan’s rule.53 Al-Ṣāḥib ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Shākir ibn al-Ghannām al-Qibṭī, who was a vizier, built and rebuilt the madrasah near al-Aẓhar.54 Qādī Badr al-Dīn ibn Suwayd al-Miṣrī al-Mālikī (d. 829) built al-Madrasah al-Suwaydīyah. This individual was originally a Coptic merchant whose father was a poultry seller in Sūq Shānūdah.55 Vizier Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ghānī ibn Niqūlā al-Armanī (of Armenian descent) built a jāmi‘ and a mausoleum in Bayn al-Sūrayn,56 and ‘Abd al-Bāqī ibn Ya‘qūb, a kātib known as Abū Ghālib, built a madrasah near Qantarat al-Mūskī.57

By the end of the fourteenth century, many of the religious officials who supervised waqfs were increasingly involved in the restoration of religious foundations. The work was often undertaken with the revenues derived from the waqfs but sometimes with the restorer’s own money. We also note the growing interest of other civilians such as merchants or physicians in the construction or restoration of educational foundations. Thus

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50Ibid., 315-316.
51Ibn Īyās, Badā‘i’ al-Zuḥūr, 2:59; see also al-Maqrīzī, al-Khiṭṭat, 2:327.
52al-Sakhāwī, al-Tibr al-Masbūk, 378, 389; al-Maqrīzī, al-Khiṭṭat, 2:327; for other examples, see ibid., 2:327-329.
53Ibid., 391.
54Ibn Īyās, Badā‘i’ al-Zuḥūr, 2:57.
55Ibid., 104; see also Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, Inbā‘ al-Ghumr, 8:111.
56Ibn Taghribirdī, al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah, 14:152.
57al-Sakhāwī, al-Tibr al-Masbūk, 153.
we learn that the Ra’is al-Atibba’ Ibn al-Maghribi built a jami’ and next to it a qubbah.\(^{58}\)

Al-Maḥallī, a well-known merchant, built a madrasah on the Nile and restored the Jami’ ‘Amr.\(^{59}\) Al-Maqrizī mentions the Madrasah Musallamīyah built in the kuṭṭ of Bayn al-Sūrayn by Kabīr al-Tujjār Nāṣīr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Musallām (d. 776).\(^{60}\)

The close ties which existed between the merchant class and the religious class as well as the support of the former for the latter is well documented in the chronicles and biographical dictionaries. From these sources we learn that many rich merchants encouraged their children to get an education and often boasted of having sons who were members of the ‘ulamā’. Furthermore, many religious scholars seem to have been involved in some type of trade at an early stage of their lives and sometimes even after they had been appointed to prominent positions.\(^{61}\) Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī himself worked as a merchant before he dedicated his life to scholarship.\(^{62}\)

The case of Qāḍī Badr al-Dīn Ḥasan ibn Suwayd al-Miṣrī, mentioned above, is relevant here since he had accumulated great wealth by investing in the Kārīm trade in Yemen.\(^{63}\) Qāḍī Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr al-Makhzūmī, known as Badr al-Dīn al-Damāmīnī, who held the position of nāʿib al-ḥukm, was also involved in trade. In fact this qāḍī died in 828/1424 while he was in India on business.\(^{64}\) The direct involvement of the ‘ulamā’ in trade during the rule of al-Nāṣīr Muḥammad may be inferred from Ibn Khaldūn’s statement mentioning the emigration of the dealers from among the ‘ulamā’ and the merchants to Miṣr during the sultan’s rule (wa-raḥala arbaʿ min al-‘ulamā’ wa-al-tujjār).\(^{65}\)

Whatever the intent of the patrons when ordering the construction of a religious foundation, in order for it to provide its intended services, it needed fixed revenues. Such revenues were produced by waqfs which consisted mostly of buildings falling under categories three (domestic) and four (commercial/industrial) mentioned above. Although land represented an important part of the endowments, it seems that greater attention was given to investments in commercial properties such as the wakālah, qaysāriyah, funduq, maṭbakh sukkar, and miṣarah, together with the construction/restoration of rental properties such as the rab’, qā’ah, riwaq, tabaqah, or ḥawsh. These foundations provide us with insights into investment practices as well as the transformation of the urban environment during Mamluk rule.

While the religious buildings remained as fixed landmarks, it was the secular buildings falling under categories three and four which defined the urban transformation of the quarters. The acquisition of large plots within the urban centers allowed patrons to restructure them in ways which suited their interests. The texts of waqfīyahs often allow us to follow what happened to a certain quarter when its land was acquired by the founder.\(^{66}\)

\(^{58}\) al-Maqrizī, al-Khiṭṭat, 2:328.

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 368.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 401.


\(^{63}\) Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, Inbā’ al-Ghumr, 8:111; Ibn Iyās, Badā’i’ al-Zuhūr, 2:104.

\(^{64}\) Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, Inbā’ al-Ghumr, 8:92; Ibn Iyās, Badā’i’ al-Zuhūr, 2:98.

\(^{65}\) Ibn Khaldūn, Ta’rīf (Beirut: Dār al-Kātib al-Lubnāni, 1979), 351.

The sources also note the transformation of quarters due to the acquisition of their properties by rich owners. For instance, when al-Nāṣir Muḥammad decided to rebuild the Jāmīʿ al-Jadīd, he acquired a number of houses and appropriated part of the road. When the jāmīʿ was constructed the area around it became a prime location.67

The pattern followed by patrons when planning their investments was to try to integrate the life of their quarters by building or reconstructing commercial and rental properties around their religious foundations. The advantages of having buildings clustered in one quarter were twofold. First, it allowed the nāẓir of the waqf to keep an eye on the foundations and control them. Second, from the economic point of view, it made sense especially if one takes into consideration the fact that water could be shared by more than one foundation (one sāqiyah or biʿr could serve two or three buildings). Transportation of drinking water would also cost less and the collection of rents would be faster. In addition to these advantages, by constructing his secular buildings next to each other, a patron could avoid some of the building restrictions which the shariʿah imposed on the proximity of buildings to each other, their architecture, their heights, and so on.68 Rich and powerful patrons would invest in the construction of a number of such clusters throughout the city and thus be able to control the development of those quarters. Although such quarters usually developed around religious foundations,69 sometimes patrons planned their religious foundations as part of a much larger project, as was the case with the foundation of Azbakīyāh where the presence of the birkah (pond), rather than the mosque, was responsible for its development.70

The booming trade of the fifteenth century gave impetus to the construction of a number of new commercial foundations such as wakālahs, and resulted in the growth of a new quarter, Būlaq, west of al-Qāhirah.71 According to the information provided by our sources, there was an increasing interest on the part of merchants and religious officials in the construction of either wakālahs or qaysāriyahs. Hence, Qāḍī Tāj al-Dīn al-Manawī built a qaysāriyah in 750/1349 and Qāḍī Jalāl al-Dīn al-Bulqiḥī built another one in the same quarter (khutt) in 811/1408.72 Small industries based on imported agricultural produce, such as olives, were also increasing. Indeed, the waqfiyahs of sultans Barsbāy, Qāytbaʿy, and al-Ghawrī bear witness to the increase in the number of maṭābikh sukcar or maʿāṣir.73 One notes that regardless of the class to which the patrons belonged, there was

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68For more information on this, see Fernandes, "Habitat et prescriptions légales" in Habitat traditionnel dans les pays musulmans autour de la Méditerranée, vol. 2: L'histoire et le milieu, Rencontre d'Aix-en-Provence, 6-8 juin 1984 (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1990), 419-426.
69For example, the case of al-Zāhir, which developed around the Sultan’s mosque, or the case of al-Muʿayyad Shaykh or Sultan al-Ghawrī. See also al-Khiṭṭat, 2:298-299.
70For an interesting study on the development of Azbakīyāh, see Doris Behrens-Abouseif, Azbakiyya and Its Environments, from Azbak to Ismaʿil (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1985).
71For further information on the growth of Būlaq, see Nelly Hanna, An Urban History of Būlaq in the Mamluk and Ottoman Periods (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1983).
73Ḥujjat Waqf al-Sultān Barsbāy, al-Awqāf 880; Ḥujjat Waqf al-Sultān Qāytbaʿy, al-Awqāf 888; Ḥujjat Waqf al-Sultān al-Ghawrī, al-Awqāf 882.
a growing tendency for them to invest in the construction of buildings which would produce greater revenues: sūqṣ, qaysāriyahs, and maṣṣārahs. These investments served no other purpose than to increase the patron’s wealth.⁷⁴

As for real estate investment, patrons showed great interest in diversification. In areas around their foundations they built or rebuilt rabṣ’s, ribāṭṣ, qa’ahs, riwāqṣ, ṭībāq and ḥawānīt and endowed them as waqfs. Rich wāqīṣ would sometimes invest in the acquisition of whole quarters, as in the case of amir Mughultaŷ al-Jamālī, who acquired a large ḥikr land on which twenty-four properties were constructed.⁷⁵ Since the ḥikr was made waqf, the money collected from the lease of the land to the property owners was left under the control of the amir who was the nāẓīr al-waqt.⁷⁶

The restoration and rebuilding of urban properties as well as the creation of new urban centers never ceased to attract the interest of the Mamluks and other elite elements of society, who through their waqfs were transforming and restructuring the city of Cairo.⁷⁷ This paper has attempted to focus on some of the problems of the patronage of architecture in the Mamluk period. The discrepancies between some sources—chronicles and waqfs—and the inscriptions of the buildings themselves indicate that it is still difficult to know who the real patron of a building was. Identifying the patron or group of patrons still leaves us with the task of determining what factors influenced the choice of monuments to be built and the selection of their location. In this endeavor we benefit greatly by looking at

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⁷⁴Even though revenue-producing foundations were placed under the umbrella of waqfs, the money collected exceeded, by far, the needs of the religious foundation on which they were made waqf.

⁷⁵Ḥikr (pl. ṣahkār); a simplified definition of the term would be “long-term lease.” In his discussion of the term, Claude Cahen wrote: “il s’agit d’une forme de louage à long terme et très souple, qui à la fois sauvegarde l’éminente propriété du propriétaire—ici l’État—, de l’autre donne au locataire une liberté d’usage plus grande que dans une ordinaire location. Les ṣahkār dont il est question ici sont connus d’Ibn Mammāṭī, qui les dit tantôt bâtis, tantôt exploités en jardins”; “Contribution à l’étude des impôts dans l’Égypte médiévale,” Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient 5 (1962): 270. The ḥikr as a long-term lease of land—built upon or used as orchards—was regulated by the shar’ī ah. A freehold property could equally be held as ḥikr which the lessee could enjoy for a certain period of time. The lease of a ḥikr covered a period of time agreed upon between the two parties. The period could be ten to thirty years, but occasionally up to ninety years. A ḥikr was not always the property of the “state” since it could be bought from the bayt al-māl (public treasury), in which case it became private property of the individual. Usually, the lessee of the ḥikr agreed to pay the owner a lump sum, in addition to the monthly or yearly amount fixed by the lease. The money paid in advance granted the lessee the privilege of disposing of the land or the freehold property the way he wanted with the proviso that at the end of the lease, the land or property be returned to its owner in its original condition. During the Mamluk period the lease of ḥikr had become widespread, even though the practice was frowned upon by conservative jurists. Many of them opposed it since it often resulted in disputes between parties and/or claims of ownership by the lessees or their descendants. For information on the ḥikr during the medieval period, see Ibn Mammāṭī, Kitāb Ḥawānīn al-Dawāwīn, (Cairo: Matba‘at Misr, 1943), 342. For interesting information on the practice and its developments during the Ottoman period, see Nelly Hanna, Habiter au Caire: La maison moyenne et ses habitants aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1985), 168.

⁷⁶Ḥujjat Waqf Mughultaŷ al-Jamālī, al-Awqaţ 1666; the passage dealing with the ḥikr is soon to be published by the present writer.

⁷⁷Ḥujjat Waqf al-Sulṭān Qanṣūh al-Ghawrī, Awaţ 883, fols. 33-37, 128-157, provides a good example of how the urban center around the mosque of al-Azhar was restructured by al-Ghawrī who left his permanent imprint on the quarter. See also Ḥujjat Waqf Tatarkhān, daughter of Ṭashtumur, Awaţ 913, fols. 27-29, 34; Ḥujjat Waqf al-Sulṭān al-Asrāf Barsbāy, Awaţ 880, fols. 246-249, 249-261, to name but a few.
the information provided by sources such as legal opinions or epistles in addition to the accounts of the chroniclers. Indeed, these sources provide us with insight into the discourse taking place between scholars of the different schools of thought. Since many of the debates often dealt with issues concerned with the application of the law to daily life, for instance, the legality of some practices or innovations touching on religious matters, they may have had an impact on the planning of some types of religious buildings and their locations. The buildings in Bayn al-Qaṣrāyn may represent a case in point as the patrons’ choice of building type and architecture may have been influenced by the debates between Ḥanafīs and Shāfiʿīs over the validity of the multiplicity of khutbahs in one urban center. Finally, thanks to the details they provide on the patterns of investment and the descriptions of the income-generating properties, waqf documents allow us to form a better picture of the relationship between power, wealth, and urban policies in the Mamluk period.